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ABSTRACT

An 18-member Collaborative of Michigan educational organizations and agencies was formed in October 1994. The Collaborative was committed to systemic reform that included inclusive relationships, challenging ideas, and changed practice to ensure better teaching and learning for all students. The Collaborative made the assumption that it would take a broad-based, diverse group to develop and implement the kinds of ideas in the public schools that will create active life-long learners who are able to contribute to a diverse democracy operating in a global society. During the initial year, the Collaborative relied on a residential community/school district academy, and a series of four Friday Seminars/Saturday Institutes to sustain newly created leadership teams at the school district level. With guidance from the Collaborative, these leadership teams would develop a school improvement plan that (ultimately) would improve teaching and learning for all students. Once developed, the plans would be modified as necessary and eventually implemented in the school district. Results from this one year effort showed that participants selected to participate in the Collaborative's educational reform efforts donated hours of time to the cause of school improvement, reported individual growth and improved leadership skills, and were more likely to perceive reform efforts benefiting all students. Lastly, it is noted that six leadership teams were still actively working on school improvement plans in March 1998, two years after state funding ended. Only two districts are known to have stopped work on the project. An appendix presents the assessment of the effects of the community/school district academy formed by the reform plan. (Contains 1 figure, 11 tables, and 7 references.) (Author/SLD)

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ED 421 494

A Program Evaluation of a Michigan Systemic Reform Initiative:

THE MICHIGAN EDUCATION LEADERSHIP COLLABORATIVE

By

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Abstract

An 18 member Collaborative of Michigan educational organizations and agencies was formed in October 1994. The Collaborative was committed to systemic reform that included inclusive relationships, challenging ideas, and changed practice to ensure better teaching and learning for all students. The Collaborative made the assumption that it would take a broad-based, diverse group to develop and implement the kinds of ideas in the public schools that will create active lifelong learners who are able to contribute to a diverse democracy operating in a global society.

During the initial year, the Collaborative relied on a residential community/ school district academy, and a series of four Friday Seminars/Saturday Institutes to sustain newly created leadership teams at the school district level. With guidance from the Collaborative, these leadership teams would develop a school improvement plan that (ultimately) would improve teaching and learning for all students. Once developed, the plans would be modified as necessary and eventually implemented in the school district.

Results from this one year effort showed that participants selected to participate in the Collaborative's educational reform efforts; donated hours of time to the cause of school improvement, reported individual growth and improved leadership skills, and were more likely to perceive reform efforts benefiting all students. Lastly, we note that six leadership teams were still actively working on school improvement plans in March 1998, two years after state funding ended. We know of only 2 districts that stopped work on the project.

A Program Evaluation of a Michigan Systemic Reform Initiative:

THE MICHIGAN EDUCATION LEADERSHIP COLLABORATIVE

Great achievements don't happen overnight. They require long term vision.

This report is dedicated to the 186 participants who received the Michigan Education Leadership Collaborative's (MELC) week long training at the 1995 community/school district leadership academies. Each participant donated hours of her/his valuable time in order to help improve public education. The State of Michigan can be proud to have such a dedicated cadre of people from many different walks of life (superintendents, central office staff, principals, teachers, school board members, community members, parents, students, support staff, clergy) working together to improve educational outcomes for Michigan's 1.6 million school children.

Background

Traditionally, professional development of educators has been seen as improving performance of individuals in rather narrowly based roles. Typically, separate programs were developed for; teachers, principals, support staff, superintendents and parents. However, the Michigan Education Leadership Collaborative (the Collaborative) recognized that it takes both a family and the whole village to raise a child.

The Collaborative focused on the village component of the family-village continuum. The MELC made the assumption that it would take a broad-based, diverse group to develop and implement the kinds of ideas in the public schools that will create active lifelong learners able to contribute to a diverse democracy operating in a global society. Throughout the training process, the MELC leadership team emphasized the importance of having a diverse team lead the district in developing model leadership plans. Collaboration with a diversity of people and groups was intended to broaden the political base of the team, as well as add to its richness and creativity, thereby increasing the likelihood of achieving sustainable results.

An 18 member Collaborative of Michigan educational organizations and agencies was formed in October 1994. The Collaborative was committed to systemic reform that included inclusive relationships, challenging ideas, and changed practice to ensure better teaching and learning for all students. The Collaborative's mission was "to design and implement model leadership activities that promoted the attainment of high educational standards for all of Michigan's learners by inspiring, energizing, creating and sustaining a rich learning environment for all children." The leadership believed that professional associations working together toward a common goal of improving education would be preferable to individual groups working alone. These 18 organizations, whose members included teachers, principals, superintendents, parents, school boards, curriculum developers and support staff had never worked together to reform and improve education. Indeed, these groups often disagreed on the strategy, outcomes, and goals of education. In the very beginning, considerable effort was expended by MELC members in building trust between constituency groups that had, at best, a limited history of working together.

Noted demographers Harold Hodgkinson and Janice Outtz (1994:16) point out:

> The cost of maintaining a prisoner for a year is more than four times the amount spent on a public school student in Michigan and there is virtually no "return on investment" with the prisoner. The problem is that most people don't see that they will have to pay a heavy price for allowing young people to go down the drain in the form of crime, unstable family situations, drugs, violence and lack of a sense of community. These costs are far more than the costs of an effective education/health/family/housing/transportation TEAM.
>
> What is needed in Michigan is a sense of urgency about the state's children that would match the fiscal urgency of [the 1994] property tax relief. . . Perhaps in each local district . . . there will be a more effective basis for educational change given the demographic realities, than at the state level, as the local level is truly where "the rubber hits the road" in terms of education, health care, transportation, justice and social services."

While the MELC recognized the need for statewide reform, the Collaborative spent the majority of its budget attempting to impact educational reform movements in local school districts. Like Hodgkinson and Outtz (1994), the Collaborative leadership came to believe that at this time, individually tailored district level educational reform plans were more feasible than statewide reform.

In analyzing the national educational reform movement, Cohen (1995:13) pointed out:

> As the reform ideas became popular and played through this fragmented structure (100,000 schools situated in 15,000 independent local governments) they were picked up by an astonishing variety of organizations--all concerned with schools but each concerned in its own way. The sprawl of organizations helped amplify differences in what educators made of the messages that flowed around them.

The 18 groups behind the formation of the MELC tried to avoid the problem of different messages by creating one umbrella organization, the Collaborative. It was hoped that one organization would reduce (if not eliminate) conflicting information received at the school district level. The 18 groups represented a wide variety of organizations concerned with a diverse set of variables related to improving education. However, the organizations were able to agree to work together to help local districts create model leadership plans.

A Work in Progress

The Collaborative's work should be considered work in progress. The Collaborative's goals were ambitious. This report, coming at the end of its first year working with school districts (with a brief follow-up through March 1998), can only be viewed as a preliminary assessment of the Collaborative's work. It would take 5 (or more) years from now to be able to make more definite statements about the success of the Collaborative's major goal--improving teaching and learning for all students. During the initial year, the Collaborative relied on a residential community/ school district academy and a series of four Friday Seminars/Saturday Institutes to sustain newly created leadership teams at the school district level. With guidance from the Collaborative, these leadership teams would develop a school improvement plan that (ultimately) would improve teaching and learning for all students. Once developed, the plans would be modified as necessary and eventually implemented in the school district.

School District Selection and Composition

Each school district in the State of Michigan was sent an information packet about the MELC and invited to submit a proposal to become a part of the Collaborative's inaugural year. Twenty-eight school districts responded by preparing a proposal to the Collaborative. After a selection process conducted by the MELC management group, proposals from 14 districts were selected to receive the Collaborative's leadership training.

The 14 school districts selected were geographically, ethnically and politically diverse. Two districts had fewer than one percent minority students (Carsonville-Port Sanilac, Cass City), five districts had between 20 and 40 percent minority students (Carmon-Ainsworth, Hartford, Bridgeport-Spaulding, Northport and Jackson), and one district had nearly 90 percent "minority" students (Detroit area E). Urban districts were represented (Detroit, Jackson) as well as very small rural districts (Carsonville-Port Sanilac, Northport). There were two "large" school districts serving over 10,000 students (Traverse City and Detroit) and two very small school districts serving less than 1,000 students (Carsonville-Port Sanilac, Northport). Overall, these 14 districts served 81,568 students, approximately 5.1% of the 1.6 million school children in the State of Michigan.

Participants

The selection of individuals to participate on the leadership team was done at the local level, with one notable exception. The Collaborative required superintendents to be included on the leadership teams. The Collaborative suggested that school districts build leadership teams of people who represent different walks of life (parents, teachers, central office staff, principals, community/business people, ISD [Intermediate School District] representatives, school administrators, school board members, and support staff). The teams were (usually) assembled by the superintendent or a member of the central administrative staff. As initially constituted, teams varied from 8 to 19 members. Each team represented a diverse group of district-wide stakeholder interests. In addition to the stakeholders suggested by the Collaborative, other members of the actual teams included: students, clergy, members of the State House, and members of the State Senate. Table 1 shows the selected school districts and the number of participants each district involved.

The survey distributed at the final exhibition revealed the following additional demographic profile of participants. Tables 2, 3, and 4 present the results. This analysis revealed that exhibition participants returning their survey's were predominantly; white, middle age, and female.

The Residential Community/School District Academy

A 5 1/2 day residential community/school district academy, held on Mackinac Island attracted 186 participants. The residential academy was designed with two broad goals: (1) help the participating districts develop their own leadership models for systemic change; and, (2) have these models serve as examples for reform for other districts. The residential academy was the major delivery system through which the Collaborative attempted to accomplish those goals by: (1) teaching the dialogue process in order to deepen the understanding among participants from diverse role groups so that all voices can be heard in the reform process; and (2) facilitate team skills to enhance the ability of teams of diverse participants to work together.

TABLE 1

SCHOOL DISTRICTS and PARTICIPANTS

The Residential Community/School District Leadership Academies.

School District	Number of Participants
Allen Park	15
Bellevue	12
Bridgeport	10
Carman-Ainsworth	15
Carsonville	13
Cass City	8
Detroit	16
Hartford	13
Jackson	15
Lakeview	15
Northport	11
Novi	12
Traverse City	19
Wyoming	12
Total	186

Table 2: Participant's Race

Racial Group	Number	Percent
African-American	8	11.4
American Indian	1	1.4
Asian	2	2.8
Hispanic	1	1.4
White, Non-Hispanic	57	81.4
Mixed Race	1	1.4
Total	70	99.8%

Table 3: Participant's Age

Age Range	Number	Percent
17-30	3	4.2
31-45	23	32.4
46-60	42	59.1
61 and over	3	4.2
Total	71	99.9%

Table 4: Participant's Gender

Gender	Number	Percent
Female	55	76.4
Male	17	23.6
Total	72	100.0%

"When I went to Mackinac Island, I had no idea what I was getting myself into."

Participant

After returning from Mackinac Island, the teams spent their time over the next 11 months developing models for changing public education in their school districts. As originally envisioned, the models developed were to be "systematically" based, but also tailored for the particular district. For example, high rate of growth in the number of students was an issue for Novi, one of the districts receiving the Collaborative's leadership training. However, for other school districts, the number of students was not expected to increase (Cass City, Jackson). These school districts worked on problems particularly salient to their school districts (dropout prevention, higher student performance).

Evaluation Procedures and Sources of Evidence

During the period of April 1995 through May 1996, Wedgewood Associates evaluated the MELC by using the following procedures: (1) reviewed the Collaborative's proposal to the State of Michigan; (2) observed the pre-academy orientation, and surveyed participants on their attitudes and beliefs toward systemic reform; (3) interviewed key members of the MELC management team; (4) attended the residential academy on Mackinac Island and surveyed participants on their attitudes and beliefs toward systemic reform at the end of the academy; (5) attended a statewide education policy institute, (6) observed the four Saturday Institutes; (7) conducted informal discussions with stakeholders, including teachers, parents, principals, superintendents, and community members; (8) attended team leadership meetings in the local districts, (9) conducted a focus group just before the final exhibition, and (10) attended the final exhibition of district leadership plans.

Limitations of This Study

This evaluation was conducted under key constraints that have limited what we were able to learn about the ultimate goals of the Collaborative. These limitations should be kept in mind as the reader evaluates this report and decides how best to use it in assessing the Collaborative. The State Board of Education provided funding for just one year. Any undertaking of this scope is commonly acknowledged to take many years (e.g., see Cohen 1995). Models of systemic change can not be collaboratively developed in diverse district teams in one year. Systemic reform is an ongoing process of continuous improvement, involving the integration of; assessment, professional development, curriculum change and new content standards (Cohen 1995). Three to five years of diminishing support are needed to firmly establish models from which a school district can learn, and apply those learned principles to improving educational outcomes for most (if not all) students. One year is simply not enough time to judge the value of a systemic reform effort. This report was prepared at a much too early time in the MELC's short life to warrant its use as a summative assessment of the Collaborative. Nevertheless, the report contains information that the policy community might find useful as comprehensive educational reform efforts become more prevalent nationwide.

Evaluation Study Methodology

Questionnaires were given to participants at the time of orientation to the academy. These questionnaires ascertained participants' attitudes and beliefs towards systemic reform, team leadership, community input and collaboration. This initial questionnaire became the baseline measure to assess the effectiveness of the MELC program at the school district level. Questionnaires were again distributed to participants at the end of the residential academy. This second questionnaire provided information on the effectiveness of the MELC residential academy. Questionnaires were distributed to participants of the Saturday Institute Programs, assessing attitudes on systemic reform and respondent perceptions on the progress the team was making in completing its leadership plan. Lastly, a comprehensive questionnaire was distributed to participants at the end of MELC's capstone event to influence district level educational change -- the "final" exhibition held in Lansing on May 17-18, 1996.

By distributing surveys to respondents with the same questions, we were able to monitor attitudes and perceptions towards systemic reform, team leadership, community input and collaboration. The baseline assessment (academy orientation questionnaire) was taken before any experiences with the MELC. Intermediate assessments (just after the residential academy, and the Saturday Institutes) allowed the evaluators to monitor change in attitudes. Lastly, a questionnaire was distributed to all participants in the final exhibition held in Lansing. For the purposes of this report, the final exhibition can be classified as an immediate "post-treatment" of MELC activities.

In a Cook & Campbell (1979) "quasi-experimental" design, the "baseline" for all participants would be their attitudes and beliefs toward systemic reform, team leadership, community input and collaboration before participation in the residential academy. The "post-test" was the attitudes and beliefs toward systemic reform, team leadership, community input and collaboration after participation in the final exhibition. Participants were used as their own controls. Using participants as their own controls lessened (but, unfortunately did not eliminate) the need to control for the possible spurious effects in variables exogenous to the MELC (i.e., the host of socioeconomic and demographic factors which previous research has identified as important correlates of receptivity to educational reform in general, such as social class, income, education, and age). Cook and Campbell (1976) argued that design controls are often better than statistical controls.

A difference of means test was used to determine whether changes in attitudes and beliefs toward systemic reform, team leadership, community input and collaboration were statistically significant. Effects that most clearly can be associated with participating in the MELC could then be highlighted.

Additionally, the evaluators made observations of most major Collaborative activities. These observations included conversations with participants. The qualitative data collected in those conversations added depth to the report and the interpretation of the quantitative data.

Findings

Enthusiasm of District-Level Educational Participants, Willing to Donate time

Participants receiving the MELC's inaugural leadership training were willing to donate hours of their time in order to work through the difficult issues and engage in deep thinking concerning systemic educational reform.

After completing the residential academy, participants were asked to attend four Saturday Institutes held in East Lansing during the 1995-1996 school year. Specific programs depended on their interests and needs. These Institutes further developed participant's skills at giving and receiving information (e.g., a Tuning Protocol, Skill Enhancement Networks, Personal and Team Development). Additionally, the Institutes also allowed the teams to get together at various times during the year to renew and encourage progress on the systematic reform work began at the residential academy. Participants donated their time to attend the residential academy and the East Lansing Institutes. Attendance at the East Lansing Institutes varied between 83 and 110. We estimate the total number of donated hours by participants to attend the East Lansing Institutes was 3,240. We also estimate that the total number of donated hours by participants to attend the Residential academy was 8,184.

In addition to donated time, participants had a high degree of ownership of the models for reform presented at the final exhibition. There was considerable enthusiasm among many of these participants to continue the work of the Collaborative, even without state funding. This ownership could keep the district level reform process moving forward, despite the fact that the State of Michigan cut off funding for the program after one year.

Location of Residential Academy

In a focus group, participants stressed the importance of holding the residential academy in an isolated place. The location chosen by the Collaborative, Mackinac Island, was viewed by participants as pivotal for the success of the training. Participants felt they made good progress on team bonding and building trust because of the isolation of Mackinac Island. Participants were able to keep in touch by phone with home and work responsibilities while on the island. However, the isolation of Mackinac Island reduced the number of participants coming, staying for a limited number of days, and leaving early. Additionally, the Mackinac Island location appeared to reduce the number of participants arriving well after the start of the residential academy. The Collaborative leadership felt that team bonding would be seriously compromised if participants left early, or came 2-3 days into the residential academy. Due to concerns surrounding the team bonding issue, the Collaborative discouraged participants from staying less than the full 5 1/2 days of the residential academy. Evaluation studies of earlier residential academies sponsored by the Michigan State University Collaborative Leadership Center found that holding a residential academy at an isolated location like Mackinac Island made it harder for participants to come and go, strengthening team bonding and thereby increasing the likelihood of long term success.

Building Capacity at the State and Local Levels for Systemic Change

One of the Collaborative's goals was to increase the leadership capacity of school districts. It was hoped that such increased leadership capacity would help the school district immediately, as well as in the long term. The Collaborative logo was chosen in part to represent this idea. The circles in the logo represented ripples of leadership. The Collaborative recognized that the circles would be small and modest at first, similar to the effect of throwing a pebble into a large pool of water. However, with the in-depth MELC training, it was hoped that the initial steps discussed at the final exhibition in Lansing would continue to build, until the ripples of leadership would become larger (and difficult to ignore). As a consequence, school districts would eventually change from within.

Local Level: Individual Growth

> We did not have a district-wide school improvement team. When we got back from Mackinac [the residential academy] all of a sudden, the district had a school improvement team--us!
>
> Participant

> We really feel like we moved ahead to personally grow and that the leadership piece [of the MELC program] is critical.
>
> Participant

> I have a passion for education, but the MELC experience rekindled (the passion) in a different way. I work with a lot of children of promise, or, you might say, children of at-risk. Thanks to the MELC, I have felt empowered to reach these students. I really think that the MELC dealt with the tools to empower change.
>
> Participant

> I went to other (school) districts that were doing community transformation. I went to their meetings. I really was impressed with the MELC training. We are light years--way ahead of those other school districts. I really thought that the MELC leadership training, the facilitators, and the year long process, was quality.
>
> Participant

Just before the final exhibition, participants were given opportunities to discuss their feelings and perceptions about the Collaborative experience with the evaluators. The four quotations presented above give evidence of the individual growth and empowerment experienced by some participants. Participants spoke of improving their own job performance due to the Collaborative training. Additionally, participants spoke of their improved abilities to relate to other people. We can conclude that the MELC built leadership capacity at the local district level. Over the next few years, MELC participants will have repeated opportunities to use the skills learned at the leadership academy to improve education. Additionally, we would expect that some of tomorrow's educational leaders will be chosen from the pool of people who participated in the Collaborative's leadership training. As evidenced by the first quotation, additional leadership responsibilities were thrust upon some teams upon returning from Mackinac Island.

Our survey data allow an additional assessment of individual growth. On the following questions, we observed a statistically significant (probability .01 or below) change from a participant's perception before the residential academy and participant's perception after completing the final exhibition in Lansing. Participants began their journey with the MELC desiring more information about school reform. Additionally, participants were skeptical about the capacity of systemic reform to benefit all school children in the district. At the time of the final exhibition, participants felt much better informed and were considerably more likely to believe that systemic reform would benefit all school children in their district.

The variables listed in Table 5 were measured on a six point scale. A value of "1" indicated disagreement with the statement. A value of "6" indicated agreement with the statement. Thus, the higher the average score, the greater the agreement with the statement.

Table 5: Change in Participant's Perceptions Before and After Receiving the Collaborative's Leadership Training

Statement	Pre-MELC Training	At the Final Exhibition
I feel that I am well informed about the need for school reform.	4.8	5.3
Systemic Reform will benefit all school children in our district	5.0	5.5

Local Level: Team Growth

> Probably the most significant thing that I brought back from the Mackinac residential academy was the growth that our team did together. We came out of Mackinac with a very strong committed team. We got to know each other very well and we began to share a vision and build that vision in the district. I don't think we could have done that without the [Mackinac Island residential academy] experience.
>
> Participant

Participants spoke of the team bonding that occurred during the residential academy on Mackinac Island. As the quotation above indicates, one participant saw the bonding as a pivotal, intermediate step towards building a district wide vision of public education. All participants in a focus group reported that the Island experience was critical to team bonding.

Our survey data allow an additional assessment of team bonding. On the following questions, we observed a statistically significant (probability <.01 or below) change from a team's perception before the leadership academy process and a team's perception after completing the final exhibition in Lansing.

As with individual growth at the local level, the variables listed in Table 6 were measured on a six point scale. A value of "1" indicated disagreement with the statement. A value of "6" indicated agreement with the statement. Thus, the higher the average score, the greater the agreement with the statement.

The teams worked on a number of issues at Mackinac Island that were necessary, but preliminary, to addressing issues of educational reform at the district level. The MELC leadership training included: listening skills, structured speaking skills, and dialogue. The designers of the Collaborative's leadership training process felt that only after participants acquired those skills could questions of educational reform productively be addressed.

The skills taught by the MELC were learned and retained by participants a year later. Participants were more likely to agree with the statement that they knew what next steps were needed, so that the educational reform process could move forward in their districts. Additionally, participants were significantly more likely to report they knew how to work together as a team at the end of the year long Collaborative leadership training than at the beginning. Consistent with the year long Collaborative leadership training, teams were less likely to report that leadership comes from the person in charge, and that the team needed help in learning the process of school reform.

Table 6: Change in Participant's Perceptions Before and After Receiving the Collaborative's Leadership Training

Statement	Pre-MELC Training	At the Final Exhibition
Our team could use help in developing the skills of working together.	4.0	3.3
Our team had the people needed to be effective in its leadership role.	5.2	4.7
We know how to work together as a team.	4.3	5.2
I have a clear vision of action steps our team needs to take.	3.4	4.7
Our team needs help in learning the process of school reform.	4.5	3.5
Leadership comes from the person in charge.	3.3	2.5

Participants were more likely to think they had the team members to be effective at the start of the year long experience than at the end. Some of the teams added members after returning from Mackinac Island (especially community members). Perhaps these teams realized that their original membership base was too narrow for the kind of broad-based educational reform envisioned by the Collaborative.

Participant's Perception of Residential Academy Components

At the final exhibition, we surveyed participants on specific MELC experiences. Regarding the Residential Academy, we asked how important was each of the following five components. Components were scored on a six point scale. A score of "1" indicated a particular component was not important. A score of "6" indicated a particular component was very important. Thus, the higher the score, the greater a particular component was seen as important. Table 7 provides a list of these components in order of priority.

Table 7: Importance of Leadership Academy Components

Component	Mean	Standard Deviation
Team Development	5.62	0.63
Personal and Team Development	5.45	0.84
District and Community Relationships	5.37	0.83
Systemic Change	5.37	0.93
Dialog Training	5.04	0.94

The results showed that all components were seen as important. The lowest scoring component, dialog training, received an average score just over 5 on the six point scale. The highest scoring component, team development, received a score (5.62) close to the top of the scale--6.0. However, the results also show that some components were viewed as more important than others. Team development and personal development were seen by participants as most important. Strangely, dialog training received the lowest score on importance. Conversations with participants revealed that dialog training was positively mentioned by nearly everybody. However, the dialog training can be unnerving to some participants. Participants used to a "top-down" decision hierarchy where one person (or a limited number of people) makes decisions may find the dialog training less important in their districts than participants who come from school districts with more open, and less hierarchical, decision making. This is speculation on our part. We have little evidence on this question. We note here the high standard deviation associated with dialog training. Participants rated this variable with the most polarized scores. The high standard deviation showed that some participants rated dialog training as very important, while others rated dialog training with low scores. The result was a high standard deviation and a lower average score.

We also asked whether each of the following five components met respondents needs. As before, components were scored on a six point scale. For the data presented in Table 8, a score of "1" indicated a particular component did not meet participant needs. A score of "6" indicated a particular component met participants' needs. Thus the higher the score, the more strongly the respondent felt that the particular component met participants needs.

Table 8: Leadership Academy Components Ordered by Meeting Participant's Needs

Component	Mean	Standard Deviation
Team Development	5.04	1.06
Personal and Team Development	4.86	0.97
District and Community Relationships	4.83	1.20
Systemic Change	4.81	1.18
Dialog Training	4.57	1.43

The rank ordering of each component on the "met needs" question was remarkably similar to the ranking of importance presented earlier. Team Development and Personal Development scored highest, and dialog training scored lowest. Additionally, the dialog training had the highest standard deviation. Overall scores tended to cluster near "4.8" indicating that the respondents perceived most components of the academy content met their needs.

MELC Delivery System

We also asked participants to rate the effectiveness of the MELC delivery system. Those data are presented in Table 9, with each component scored on a six point scale. A score of "1" indicated a particular component was judged "not at all effective." A score of "6" indicated a particular component was judged "very effective." Thus the higher the score, the more effective was a particular component.

Results show that the residential academy was judged most effective. Judged least effective was the skill enhancement networks. The MELC initially put in considerable resources (time and effort) to build skill enhancement networks into the leadership training. However, as the MELC management group came to learn, participants were not very interested to become active in these networks. Eventually, the MELC management group focused on other areas.

Table 9: Effectiveness of Collaborative's Delivery System

Component	Mean	Standard Deviation
Residential Academy	5.31	1.15
Final Exhibition (in May 1996)	4.75	1.16
Saturday Institutes	4.34	1.21
Orientation to the Residential Academy	4.11	1.42
Skill Enhancement Networks	3.46	1.49

Stability and Sustainability

Stability

Stability of teams did not seem to participants to be a major issue. On the survey distributed at the final exhibition, we asked participants questions concerning the stability of the team. Eight-seven percent of participants responded that their team was stable. In the remaining 13%, where participants indicated the team was unstable, half thought the changing make-up of the team impacted positively on the team's work. Overall, we find the teams stable, with almost no evidence that instability was an issue.

Sustainability

On the survey distributed at the final exhibition, we asked participants "Let us assume NO funds are available to continue the Collaborative for next year. Will your community/ district team be able to sustain its work?" Seventy percent of the respondents said their community/district team would be able to continue its work. Only 4% said their community/ district team would not be able to continue its work. The other 26% did not know.

The MELC planted 14 seeds of educational reform throughout the state of Michigan in 1995. Those seeds have now sprouted small plants. These plants may continue to grow, even without state funds to support the Collaborative. We note here that the Collaborative turned out to be a "one year and out" program. Without state money, some of the seeds of educational reform would not have been planted. However, once planted, 70% of the respondents felt that the district reform plans presented in Lansing at the final exhibition would continue without state funding.

One school district has directly and concretely built on the MELC experience. This school district used MELC participation as one component of a GOALS 2000 grant from the Federal Government. One member of the team thought the MELC experience was crucial in getting the GOALS 2000 grant. For this school district, the work started with the leadership academy will continue with alternative funds over the next few years.

In March 1998, David Kingsley attempted to contact each of the 14 districts, to determine if the leadership teams were still actively working on the Collaborative's educational reform initiative. Table 10 presents the results. Six of the eight districts contacted reported that the Collaborative's work was sustained. All six report using leadership skills learned from the Collaborative's program to benefit the district. In two districts, the leadership team inspired by the Collaborative continued despite a change in superintendent (Jackson, Carsonville-Port Sanilac)

There were two districts where the work did not continue. One district (Cass City) used the Collaborative's model to develop strategies to pass a bond proposal. Once the bond proposal passed, this district met its goal for participating in the Collaborative. The other district not continuing the work of the Collaborative, Traverse City, was involved in a bitter labor dispute regarding contracts for teachers. Due to the labor dispute, the Collaborative's model for educational reform never was started. The other six districts could not be reached, and the sustainability of the Collaborative's work in those districts is unknown.

Table 10: Sustainability of the Leadership Teams in March, 1998

TEAM	PROGRESS
1. Allen Park	
2. Bellevue	
3. Bridgeport-Spaulding Community School District	CONTINUES "We have seem continuing real benefits from the Collaborative. The Academy really clicked and cemented the group together. Learning has continued. We are not afraid to go back and listen to the community; we ask what kind of jobs do you think students will be doing? Having the contacts/resource people from the Collaborative has been a real plus. No one regrets the experience.
4. Carman-Ainsworth Community Schools	CONTINUES "We were already working with the Johnson City Model. This provided us an opportunity to pull a leadership team together. We actually consolidated three teams. It was great leadership training." This year we did focus group studies to gather recommendations for quality education. Team members say "Let's try that thing we learned on Mackinaw." We have used the shaker box tool. "It's not the plan we developed, but the process [that has been so valuable]." It would be nice to have continuing planned contact.
5. Carsonville-Port Sanilac	CONTINUES STRONG "That Leadership Collaborative did us a world of good!" All of the community reps are still involved. In the second we started to stumble, but now we have focused on a strategic plan and the last two meetings have really gone well. We are doing a communication, curriculum, facilities, and middle school plan."

TEAM	PROGRESS
	Table 10, continued
6. Cass City Public Schools	DISTRICT GOAL CENTERED "Our theme differed - we were successful in getting the bond issue passed which was our goal. The written communications tools we developed have continued." There has been more staff involved; community involvement has not increased.
7. Detroit Public Schools	
8. Hartford Public Schools	
9. Jackson Public Schools	CONTINUES "It more or less continues through our District Leadership Team. There is more community involvement through the team which also includes school board members." Jackson also did a series of focus group to get community input.
10. Lakeview	CONTINUES
11. Northport	
12. Novi Public Schools	
13. Traverse City Area Public Schools	Never really got started. It was my impression that the district was locked in a power struggle with the TCEA.
14. Wyoming Public Schools	CONTINUES "More people are involved. We have 400 different people who have participated to date." "It pushed us to think more broadly - to think of the wider community. If we aren't in concert with the entire community, we are losing large learning opportunities. We need the community to advocate with the agencies." The Collaborative has created a safe place to exchange ideas.
14 Districts	6 validated continuations; 2 are not.

Walks of Life and Team Differences

Comparing our "pre" MELC surveys with the "post" MELC surveys, we can conclude walks of life (or role differences) were minor factors in the work of the Collaborative. Participants in the Collaborative's leadership academy did not differ statistically in their attitudes and beliefs towards educational reform after receiving leadership training. Teachers, school administrators, superintendents, parents and community members held substantially similar attitudes and beliefs towards the direction of educational reform. This is an important finding of communality across some of the major stakeholder groups in the public education system. This finding bolsters one core belief of the MELC, that stakeholder groups working together can come to consensus on broad issues to improve teaching and learning.

Maturation of Teams

The evaluation did find major differences in initial status of attitudes and beliefs towards educational reform between teams. Some teams were very enthusiastic towards systematic educational reform. Other district teams were far more skeptical. We note here that teams entered the MELC with differences in prior exposure to systematic educational reform. One district, Lakeview, had been involved with similar experiences for over five years. Another district, Cass City, had no prior experience with systemic education reform. At the final exhibition the gap between the enthusiastic and generally experienced teams and the skeptical and generally less inexperienced teams narrowed considerably.

A consolidated index was created to assess the effect of the MELC year long experience on the leadership teams. The consolidated index was made up of nine attitudinal questions (see appendix) which were measured pre and post MELC. Each question was measured on a six point Likert Scale ranging from disagree (given a score of "1") to agree (given a score of "6").

Overall, we found that teams showed greater agreement on the nine questions at the end of the MELC than at the start. On average, teams increased their agreement on these questions by 0.424 points on the six point scales. The increase in agreement was statistically significant ($t=3.49$, $df=26$, probability $<.01$).

We were also able to analyze whether teams showed the same overall gain in agreement. In particular, two of the 14 teams came out of the Residential Academy at Mackinac Island very skeptical of the MELC process. These two teams averaged 3.92 on the consolidated index. For comparison purposes, the two teams scoring highest had an averaged score of 4.59.

The teams initially averaging 3.92 on the nine questions showed an average gain of 0.55 points on the six point scale. This 0.55 point gain between the residential academy and the final exhibition in Lansing was statistically significant ($t=3.54$, $df=8$, probability $<.01$). Two of the most enthusiastic teams, with an initial average score of 4.59, also showed gains on the same questions over the identical period. However, those gains were smaller, averaging 0.22 on the six point scale. The gains for the teams with high initial scores were statistically insignificant ($t=0.792$, $df=8$, ns). For completeness of the analysis, we have also included the data from all the rest of the teams, classified as "middle." The consolidated index gains data for the three groupings of teams is presented in Table 11.

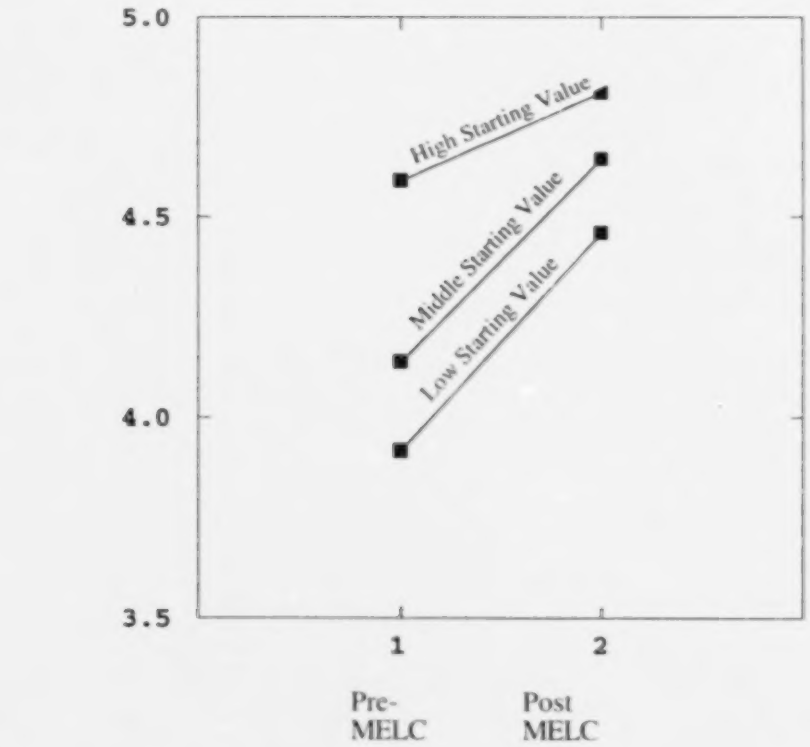
Table 11: Maturation of Leadership Teams During the MELC experience

Initial Team Score at Start of Collaborative's Program	Score at Start of Collaborative Experience	Score at End of one Year of Collaborative Experience	Maturation
Low	3.92	4.47	0.55
Middle	4.14	4.64	0.50
High	4.59	4.81	0.22

Some of the increase of the low scoring Mackinac Island teams can be attributed to the statistical effect "regression towards the mean." However, scores for the "middle" teams went up at about the same rate as the "low" teams.. All teams show evidence for maturation during the time they were involved with the MELC program. Maturation was higher for the teams starting out with lower initial scores, as shown in Figure 1. Overall, we can conclude that the gap between the enthusiastic and skeptical teams narrowed considerably over the year long MELC program. We note here that teams initially scoring higher at the start of the MELC process were still able to show more agreement with MELC principles at the final exhibition than teams initially scoring lowest.

The converging lines on Figure 1 show that difference distinctly.

Figure 1: Maturation of Teams During Participation in the Year-Long MELC Training Program



Conclusion

Fourteen teams and 186 participants went on a one year journey to improve educational outcomes in the State of Michigan. What started out as mission impossible--higher educational outcomes for all students--was seen in the end as mission in progress. Five participants (including three superintendents) volunteered that all students in their school districts would immediately benefit from the leadership plan developed with MELC help. One participant thought that all students would never benefit from the leadership plan. From our surveys, we found that, on average, participants thought it would take five years for all students in their school district to benefit from the proposed school improvement plans.

Armed with an increased repertoire of leadership skills to deal with people and problems, we expect that participants of the Collaborative's leadership training process will attempt to deal with many difficult issues concerning educational policy at the district or school level. However, with the leadership training given by the MELC, participants now appear to be on a different playing field than stakeholders who were not exposed to the leadership training (including the general public). The general public believes education suffers from three major probiems: lack of order in the classroom, lack of discipline in the schools, and too little instructional time spent teaching the basics (Johnson and Immerwahr, 1994; Yankelovich 1995). Order, discipline and the basics were not issues on which the Collaborative's systemic reformers appeared to have a particular focus.

Systemic reformers in Michigan (and more than 30 other states) have embraced a series of changes in public education: developing more challenging national (or state) performance standards, defining what all students should know in core subject areas (such as science, math, history, English, and geography), and replacing multiple-choice tests with more challenging assessments that require children to demonstrate command of a subject putting their knowledge to use solving problems (Johnson and Immerwahr, 1994; Cohen 1995). Surveys of the general public find support for these reforms. However Johnson and Immerwahr (1994) note: It is as if people are saying, "Well that's all well and good, but what about the guns, the drugs, the truancy, and the students who can't add, spell or find France on a map?" According to Yankelovich (1995) educational leaders must engage the public's preoccupation with order, discipline and teaching the basics. Further, Yankelovich (1995) warned Michigan policy makers, "do not get too far ahead of the public."

Lastly, we note that some participants receiving the Collaborative's leadership training thought public education was in crisis. Yankelovich (1995) pointed out that the general public does not view public education in crisis. Additionally, Yankelovich claimed that there is no sense of urgency in the public to deal with education issues. Similarly, Hodgkinson and Outtz (1994) note the lack of urgency concerning education in Michigan. Hodgkinson and Outtz (1994:16) state "what is needed in Michigan is a sense of urgency about the state's children that would match the fiscal urgency of property tax relief." Yankelovich (1995) concluded that the public is basically satisfied with the current status of their neighborhood school in Michigan. The lack of urgency on the part of the general public may put an upper limit on the scope of the reforms attempted by these 14 teams.

MELC participants may be wise to move slowly to implement educational reforms that may be seen by some stakeholders as controversial. Ironically, educators see professional development schools, group work, team teaching, individualized instruction, and the many curriculum projects as addressing these core concerns. By making schools more exciting places of student learning, and more responsive to the needs of students, educators see their best chance to influence order, discipline, and mastery of the basics. But, educators

have so far failed to communicate this understanding to the mass public. Within the professional education and "children first" communities, there is often a high level of urgency. However, until this sense of urgency consumes the public and motivates a full public dialogue on how we will restructure our systems to successfully nurture and socialize our children, it is difficult to see that great progress can be made on the core concerns. The Michigan Education Leadership Collaborative competently implemented the many operational activities promised in its contract. The irony of the situation is that the funding to publicize children's issues to help motivate the public to engage in the debate on core issues, was eliminated from the project.

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APPENDIX

I. Assessment of Academy Effects by Initial Team Ranking

To assess the effect of the community/school district academy on the maturation of the teams, a consolidated index was created from the following nine questions:

(1) I feel I am well informed about the need for school reform.

(2) Systemic school reform will benefit all of the school children in our district.

(3) I need more knowledge about educational change. (** scores inverted)

(4) I have a clear vision of action steps our team needs to take.

(5) Our team needs help in learning the process of school reform. (** scores inverted)

(6) I feel strongly committed to the systemic reform process.

(7) Our district is strongly committed to the systemic educational reform process.

(8) Our team will be able to achieve significant reform goals.

(9) In my opinion, leadership comes from the person in charge.(** scores inverted)

Each question was measured on a six point scale ranging from disagree (given a score of "1") to agree (given a score of "6"). For three questions (#3, #5, #9), higher scores represent agreement with opinions contrary to what higher scores represent on the other six questions. The scale for these three questions were inverted. Thus, for all nine questions, we would predict higher scores for participants (and teams) at the end of the year long MELC journey, compared to scores at the beginning of the MELC process. In order to avoid having unusual distributions impact the overall composite number, each question was z-scored before computing the composite average. After z-scoring each question, the composite number was returned to the original six point scale.

Discrete ordered data was treated as interval level data for this analysis. The interested reader can see Labovitz (1970) for a complete justification of this step.